

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USSS-00 /026 W  
-----221722 000905 /40

O 221600Z FEB 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0012

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BOGOTA 1657

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: ASEC, PINS, CASC, CO  
SUBJ: KIDNAPPING OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER: SITREP 13

1. PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR SORZANO CALLED ON FARC INTERMEDIARY DOCTOR VILLAMIL FEBRUARY 21. VILLAMIL SAID HE THOUGHT THAT HE KNOW THE SPECIFIC TOPIC SORZANO WANTED TO DISCUSS WITH HIM. AFTER CLOSING THE DOOR SORZANO HANDED HIM THE LETTER CONTAINING HUMANITARIAN APPEAL. VILLAMIL GLANCED AT IT AND READ IT RATHER SUPERFICIALLY AT BEST. PUTTING THE LETTER BACK IN THE ENVELOPE HE STARTED TALKING ABOUT HIS OWN ROLE IN THIS CASE. IN HIS OPINION KIDNAPPING WAS A DESPICABLE ACT AND AN EMBARRASSMENT TO ALL COLOMBIANS. THIS, HOWEVER, WAS A DIFFICULT CASE AND HE FELT THAT THE ONLY HOPE OF GETTING THE VOLUNTEER BACK ALIVE WOULD BE TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS AND TO PAY THE RANSOM. HE THOUGHT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE AN ETHICAL PROBLEM IN PAYING RANSOM BUT IT WAS, IN HIS OPINION, THE ONLY WAY OUT. HE THOUGHT THAT MAYBE IF THE U.S. FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO PAY CASH FOR THE VOLUNTEER IT MIGHT BE FEASIBLE TO GIVE AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT INSTEAD. BUY ANY ATTEMPT TO GET TOUGH WOULD YIELD UNDESIRABLE RESULTS- I.E., A DEAD VOLUNTEER.

2. DOCTOR VILLAMIL SAID THAT PC DIRECTOR SHOULD UNDER-  
STAND THAT FOR HIM IT WAS A VERY DELICATE SITUATION WITH A

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LOT OF AMBIGUITY. IN THIS WORLD THE ETHICAL VALUES HAVE BEEN INVERTED AND WE SURELY MUST KNOW THAT A LOT OF VERY HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND MILITARY OFFICERS WERE CORRUPT AND INVOLVED IN DRUG TRAFFIC. ON THE OTHER HAND, THOSE WHO TRY TO DO GOOD AND HAVE HONORABLE INTENTIONS ARE OFTEN MIS-INTERPRETED AND ACCUSED OF HAVING EVIL ULTERIOR MOTIVES. HE HIMSELF WAS A CHRISTIAN AND A MEMBER OF THE CONSERVATIVE

PARTY AND THERE WAS NOT ONE ATOM OF COMMUNISM IN HIM. HE HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY THRUST IN THE ROLE OF INTERMEDIARY SIMPLY BECAUSE HE HAD INHERITED FROM HIS FATHER A LARGE SPREAD OF LAND RIGHT SMACK IN THE ZONE WHERE THE FARC HOLD SWAY. HE GOT ALONG WITH THEM AND THEY RESPECTED HIM. BUT BY SOCIAL POSITION AND POLITICAL BELIEF HE HAD VERY LITTLE IN COMMON WITH THEM. HIS OFFER TO HELP WAS BASED ON HIS BELIEF THAT THE KIDNAP OF STARR WAS A SHAME FOR ALL COLOMBIANS AND BECAUSE HE FELT HE COULD BE OF USE. BUT HE WAS NOT DOING IT FOR MONEY. HE IS AN ARTIST AND AS SUCH MONEY IS OF LITTLE INTEREST TO HIM. MORE IMPORTANT TO HIM IS PUBLIC ACCLAIM AND RECOGNITION OF HIS WORK AS AN ARTIST. YET, SINCE THIS WOULD BE THE THIRD OR FOURTH TIME IN WHICH HE ACTED AS AN INTERMEDIARY HE WAS RUNNING THE RISK THAT PEOPLE WOULD THINK THAT HE WAS DOING IT FOR SELFISH REASONS, TO TRY TO GET SOMETHING FOR HIMSELF. HE AGAIN UNDERSCORED HIS VIEW THAT IT WAS A VERY AMBIGUOUS AND DELICATE SITUATION FOR HIM.

3. HE THEN BEGAN A SUMMARY OF HIS EXPERIENCES IN THE LEUPIN (HONORARY DUTCH CONSUL) KIDNAPPING CASE. HE CLAIMED THAT HE HAD THE APPROVAL OF THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT TO SERVE AS AN INTERMEDIARY AND YET, MERELY AS A PUBLICITY STUNT, THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT HAD PICKED HIM UP. HE TOLD OF A MILITARY OFFICER REFERRING TO HIM AS EITHER "A PHYSICIAN, AN ARTIST OR A COMMON BANDIT." HE THOUGHT THAT HE COULD HAVE SUEDED THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT FOR LIBEL BUT HAD REFRAINED FROM DOING SO.

4. IN VIEW OF HIS PREVIOUS SAD EXPERIENCE HE THOUGHT THAT  
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HE WOULD SERVE AS INTERMEDIARY ONLY IF HE HAD EXPRESS APPROVAL FROM THE U.S. AMBASSADOR AND FROM GENERAL MATALLANA (CHIEF OF JOINT STAFF). PC DIRECTOR INFORMED HCZ THAT HE WAS THERE WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE U.S. AMBASSADOR AND THAT THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN INFORMED OF HIS MISSION BUT DID NOT KNOW WHO EXACTLY WOULD SERVE AS INTERMEDIARY. PC DIRECTOR TOLD HIM HE WOULD PASS HIS REQUESTS TO THE AMBASSADOR AND VILLAMIL REPEATED THAT HE WANTED TO MEET WITH THE AMBASSADOR HIMSELF.

5. VILLAMIL AGAIN REPEATED HIS GENERAL THEME OF HOW DELICATE HIS ROLE WAS AND HOW IT PLACED HIM IN AN AMBIGUOUS POSITION. HE HAD INTERVENED IN THE LEUPIN CASE INITIALLY AS A PHYSICIAN BUT THEN GOT CAUGHT UP IN THE PROCESS. PC DIRECTOR AGREED THAT THIS WAS A DELICATE MISSION AND TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON STARR'S POOR STATE OF HEALTH.

6. DR. VILLAMIL SAID THAT IN HIS OPINION FARC WOULD NOT HARM STARR ALTHOUGH THERE WAS AN OUTSIDE CHANCE THAT THEY

MIGHT HAVE ALREADY KILLED HIM DUE TO THE EL BOGOTANO CHARGE THAT STARR WAS A CIA AGENT. HE THOUGHT THAT THE GUERRILLAS WOULD ALREADY BE IN "EL PATO" BUT THAT THEY WOULD NEVER BE LOCATED BY GOC DUE TO THE WILDNESS OF THE REGION.

7. PC DIRECTOR MADE THE GENERAL COMMENT THAT HE THOUGHT IT WAS INCREDIBLE THAT PEOPLE WOULD ACCUSE A PCV OF BEING A CIA AGENT. SUCH A CHARGE WOULD BE MET WITH LAUGHTER AND RIDICULE IN THE U.S. BECAUSE ANYONE THAT KNOWS ANYTHING ABOUT AMERICAN SOCIETY WOULD KNOW THAT INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE NORMALLY ATTRACTED BY ONE AGENCY ARE REPELLED BY THE OTHER. VILLAMIL AGREED BUT HE THOUGHT THAT THE DAMAGE MIGHT HAVE BEEN DONE ALREADY BY THE EL BOGOTANO.

8. PC DIRECTOR TOLD HIM THAT HE THOUGHT IT WAS IRONIC THAT OF ALL THE FOREIGN PROGRAMS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAD THE GUERRILLAS WOULD HAVE CHOSEN THE ONE PROGRAM THAT HAD BEEN ORIGINALLY  
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CONCEIVED AND IMPLEMENTED TO HELP THE NEEDY OF THE WORLD. VILLAMIL AGREED AND STATED THAT HE WAS A GREAT ADMIRER OF THE PEACE CORPS. THAT PRECISELY IN THE REGION OF "EL PATO" WHERE HE HAS HIS HACIENDA AND THE GUERRILLAS THEIR HEADQUARTERS, PCVS HAD BUILT A SCHOOL. SO HE HAD FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE OF THE GOOD WORKS DONE BY PCVS. PC DIRECTOR THEN SAID THAT HE WAS VERY PROUD TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE PEACE CORPS BECAUSE OF THE GOOD WORKS THE VOLUNTEERS WERE DOING.

9. VILLAMIL SAID THAT HE WOULD GLADLY SERVE AS INTER-MEDIARY IN TAKING THE LETTER TO FARC BUT ONLY ON THE CONDITION THAT THE U.S. AMBASSADOR, GENERAL MATAALLANA (AND THERE HE ADDED A NEW DEMAND) THAT THE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT WOULD ALL GIVE EXPLICIT APPROVAL OF HIS ROLE. REPEATING ONCE MORE THE DELICATE NATURE OF HIS MISSION HE MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE MILITARY MIGHT DECIDE TO GO AFTER HIM IN WHICH CASE HE ALSO WANTED ASSURANCES THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WOULD ALLOW HIM TO ENTER THE UNITED STATES.

10. PC DIRECTOR THEN SUMMARIZED THE CONVERSATION STATING THAT HE WAS A FUNCTIONARY AND THAT HE HAD NO POWERS TO MAKE THESE PROMISES BUT THAT HE WOULD CONVEY TO THE AMBASSADOR BY TUESDAY MORNING THE FOLLOWING FOUR STIPULATIONS:

1. THAT HE WANTED TO MEET WITH THE U.S. AMBASSADOR.
2. THAT HE WANTED APPROVAL BY GENERAL MATAALLANA.
3. THAT HE WANTED THE APPROVAL OF THE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT.
4. THAT HE WANTED ASSURANCES THAT HE WOULD BE ALLOWED INTO THE UNITED STATES IF SOMETHING WENT WRONG.

1. VILLAMIL SAID IN PARTING THAT HIS STIPULATIONS HAD TO

BE MET PROMPTLY BECAUSE HE WAS GOING TO NEIVA FRIDAY FEBRUARY  
25 AND THAT HE COULD CARRY THE LETTER WITH HIM TO GIVE TO  
HIS "MAYORDOMO". (PRESUMABLY THE "MAYORDOMO" WOULD  
GIVE IT TO FARC.) SO ALL HIS STIPULATIONS SHOULD BE  
MET NO LATER THAN THURSDAY. SORZANO RESPONDED THAT HE  
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WOULD SEE THE AMBASSADOR TUESDAY MORNING AND CONVEY  
TO HIM BOTH THE REQUESTS AND THE TIME FRAME.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USSS-00 /026 W

-----221722 000768 /47

O 221600Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0013

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BOGOTA 1657

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC, PINS, CASC, CO

SUBJC KIDNAPPING OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER: SITREP 13

12. ACCORDING TO PC DIRECTOR, DR. VILLAMIL DID MOST OF THE  
TALKING DURING THE MEETING. HE WAS VERY ARTICULATE AND HE DID  
NOT SEEM SURPRISED TO SEE PC DIRECTOR OR TO HEAR HIS REQUEST.  
HE WAS WELL INFORMED ABOUT THE STARR CASE. HE TRIED VERY  
HARD TO CONVINCE SORZANO THAT HIS ONLY MOTIVATION WAS A  
HUMANITARIAN ONE.

13. EMBASSY COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

WE FEEL CONFIDENT THAT THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PC DIRECTOR'S  
APPEAL WILL REACH THE FARC COMMAND. AS A SECRETMEMBER OF THE  
FARC HIMSELF, VILLAMIL WILL UNDOUBTEDLY PASS THIS MESSAGE ON  
WHETHER IS CONDITIONS ARE MET OR NOT. CONSEQUENTLY, EMBASSY

CONSIDERS THAT THERE IS NO COMPELLING REASON TO TRY TO MEET VILLAMIL'S DEMANDS AND, MOREOVER, WE FEEL THAT THERE ARE IMPORTANT REASONS FOR NOT DOING SO. A MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR WOULD OF COURSE UNDERCUT OUR CHOSEN PLAN OF KEEPING THE PEACE CORPS OUT IN FRONT AT THIS STAGE. MORE IMPORTANT, IT WOULD WE THINK BE VIEWED BY VILLAMIL AND HIS FARC COMRADES AS THE OPENING OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GUERRILLAS. VILLAMIL HAS ALREADY TALKED OF RANSOM AND OTHER POSSIBLE DEMANDS IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH THE SECRET

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PC DIRECTOR AND WE FEEL THAT HE WOULD RAISE THIS AGAIN IN A MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR. IN ADDITION, WE FEEL THAT VILLAMIL WOULD EXPLOIT A CONTACT WITH THE AMBASSADOR IN HIS OWN SELF INTEREST TO IMPROVE HIS OWN TROUBLED POSITION VIS A VIS THE GOC. THIS IS NO DOUBT HIS PURPOSE IN ASKING US TO FACILITATE GUARANTEES FROM GENERAL MATALANA AND THE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT. IN SUM, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT WE SHOULD EITHER NOT REPLY AT ALL TO VILLAMIL OR, PREFERABLY, HAVE THE PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR CONTACT HIM AGAIN TO RE-ITERATE AND UNDERLINE THE HUMANITARIAN NATURE OF HIS ORIGINAL APPEAL, TO REAFFIRM THAT WE ARE NOT GOING TO REVEAL HIS IDENTITY TO THE GOC AND TO INFORM HIM THAT WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO NEGOTIATE WITH HIM REGARDING THE MESSAGE. WE REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS URGENTLY. SANCHEZ

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## Message Attributes

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**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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